

Amendment to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of authenticating an audio-visual signal comprising:

dividing a whole image that contains at least one region of flat content into a plurality of regions;

generating a signature including generating signature bits from each of the plurality of regions including the at least one region of flat content;

embedding of said signature without subdividing the signature by spreading the signature bits of said signature across the whole- at least a portion of the image which is larger than one of the regions, such that the signature bits from all regions can be extracted even if the at least one region of flat content has been replaced by tampering whereby the image is protected from tampering in the at least one region of flat content.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein said signature is embedded as a watermark.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3 wherein the watermark is a spread spectrum watermark.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3 wherein the watermark is embedded according to the best trade-off between payload size of said image, robustness of said watermark and visibility of said watermark.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein each signature bit is embedded multiple times in different locations within the image.

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein spreading said signature bits comprises decomposing said signature bits to multiple areas or a single large area within said image such that information needs to be extracted from said multiple areas or said single large area within said image, in order to evaluate the original signature bits.

8-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for embedding authentication signatures in images comprising:

a means for dividing images which have flat content areas into a plurality of blocks;

a means for generating a signature, ~~bits from all~~ each of the blocks contributing at least one bit of the signature;

a means for embedding said signature ~~bits across the whole image as a whole without subdividing the signature~~.

12. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium having a plurality of computer-executable instructions for authenticating images, the computer-executable instructions comprising:

a first program module which generates instructions for a computer for dividing the images into regions, at least one of the regions including an area of flat content;

a second program module which generates instructions for a computer for generating a signature, said signature being generated by generating at least one signature bits ~~bit~~ from each of the regions; and

a ~~three-third~~ third program module which generates instructions for a computer for embedding said signature in said images without subdividing the signature, such that said signature is spread across the image such that the area of flat content is protected from tampering.

13. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, further including one of a surveillance camera, a security camera, a digital image

camera, a digital video camera, and a medical imaging system which generates the images.